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Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's
Chorus

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Fall 2002

Crescendo!, Autumn 2002

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Crescendo!

The Newsletter of
the Buffalo Gay
Men's Chorus

Volume 1 • Issue 1
Autumn 2002

The Sweet Sounds of Summer

"Sounds of Summer" found fifty-eight men onstage, resplendent in new rainbow-hued polo shirts, before packed houses at our Unitarian-Universalist Church home and at Trinity Episcopal Church on June 14 and 15 2002. The men of the BGMC and guest artists delivered a program of 22 pieces, chosen by Music Director Barbara Wagner to fall lightly on the ear. Debi Overton accompanied most numbers; others were sung a cappella, and a few were enriched with additional instruments.

Soloists from the Chorus included Guy Tomassi, Paul LaDuca, Max Phillips, Kevin Thompson, Dan Wasinger, Rob Jackson, Steve Young, Mike Bardo, Jeff Wilson, Brad Williams and Bill Roof; Jim Estep joined guest singers Barbara Cooper and Jennifer Grace Mernitz in a Mozart trio. BPO bassoonist Glenn Einschlag brought a new instrumentalist friend, oboist Bud



BGMC filled two halls at our June concerts.

Roach, into our family; and Peter Smith charmed us all with a harp accompaniment.

Comments heard in the days and weeks following the concert centered on the appeal of the multi-textured program and the increasingly polished

sound of the chorus under Barbara Wagner's direction. Everyone marveled at the maturity of our young organization, reflected in our attractive posters and program, the efficient ticket handling (volunteers from Shea's) and ushering (volunteers from the Buffalo Frontrunners / Frontwalkers), and

the friendly atmosphere and yummy snacks at both receptions. Thanks to all who donated their time, effort and goods and services; and special thanks to our host churches, our advertisers, and the Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus.

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus Marches and Sings with Pride

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus made its first appearance at a Buffalo Pride celebration on a June 2, marching proudly near the head of the parade. Chorus members passed out fliers

announcing the upcoming "Sounds of Summer" concert.

Led by Music Director Barbara Wagner, perched on the rear deck of a vintage Cadillac convertible, chorus members did some impromptu singing as they marched up Elmwood Avenue on the way to the Pride celebration on Bidwell Parkway. The chorus performed three numbers from the bandstand, ending with a



BGMC performs on the Pride stage at Bidwell Parkway.



Barbara Wagner, proudly leading the men of the BGMC at Pride 2002.

rousing rendition of "Brand New Day" from *The Wiz*.

Lonnie Arnold to Lead BGMC Voice Class

Bill Fay will teach music reading to interested choristers

Chorus members will have a wonderful opportunity this fall to enhance their music skills.

Beginning at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, September 17 (our second rehearsal of the season), two music classes will be offered for the singers' consideration.

Lonnie Arnold, a retired music teacher from Monroe County, will offer a voice class. Lonnie holds a Master's degree from the Eastman School of Music and has recently moved to Niagara County. Enrollment in the voice class will be limited to eight singers.

Concurrently, our own Bill Fay will teach a music reading class, which will be capped at twenty enrollees. Bill teaches high school music in Niagara Falls and is a graduate of SUNY at Fredonia and SUNY at Buffalo.

Both classes will run for 45 minutes each Tuesday for ten weeks. At 6:45 both classes will break for a light supper provided by the BGMC, and all singers will reconvene at 7:00 for chorus rehearsal.

The board of the BGMC has voted to grant funds to support these educational ventures as a pilot project. While they are subsidized, classes will still

require payment of registration fees. The voice class fee will be \$25.00 (for the ten week series) and the music reading class will cost \$10.00 (also for ten weeks). To reserve a place in either class, please contact Bill Fay.

Imperial Court Donates \$300

Her Imperial Majesty Vicki Vogue (née Danny Winter), a member of the Imperial Court of Buffalo, recommended the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus to receive an award of \$300 as an organization that contributes to the cultural atmosphere of the Buffalo arts scene. The award was presented to President Jim Estep, representing the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, during an Imperial Court ceremony and fund raising event recognizing organizations in Buffalo for their contributions to health care, social services, arts and culture at Club Marcella on Saturday August 17 2002.

The BGMC appreciates the support of all members of the GLBT, arts and neighborhood communities as we continue our mission of producing vocal music of high quality, creating harmony and celebrating pride.

HSBC Celebrates Diversity with BGMC's Help

by Jason Ward

On June 6, 2002 the BGMC sang for a packed house at the HSBC Diversity Celebration at the bank's Buffalo headquarters. The elegant cocktail-hour event was put on by the GLOBE (gay, lesbian, & other bank employees) Committee as a means to show both HSBC's commitment to valuing diversity, as well as applaud their new domestic partner benefits program which includes same-sex partners.

This celebration was attended by many high ranking officers of HSBC including the CEO of HSBC Bank USA, Youssef Nasr. The keynote speaker of the event was New York

State Attorney General in Charge of the Buffalo Office Hon. Barbra Kavanaugh. Both Mr. Nasr and Ms. Kavanaugh delivered impassioned remarks in support of diversity and inclusiveness, especially with regard to GLBT employees.

At the conclusion of the BGMC's performance, the chorus was presented with a check for \$500.00 by GLOBE Committee Chair SEVP Kathy Friend, and Committee members Bonnie Weinberger, and Jennifer Schuster (sister of yours truly). From the responses of those who attended the function, the general consensus was that our rendition of "Over the Rainbow" was the crowd favorite.

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The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Volume 1 • Issue 1
Autumn 2002

Editor Roger Parris
Designer Max Phillips

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc.
Incorporated 2001 as a
501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation in the State of New York

Music Director Barbara
Wagner

Officers and Directors 2002-2003

President James A. Estep
Vice-Pres. Sherwood Sipprell
Treasurer R. Mark Meyer
Secretary Roger Parris
Directors: Douglas Levy, John Herbert, Daniel Wasinger, Max Phillips, William B. Gardner

The Board of Directors of the BGMC meets at 7 PM on the third Monday of every month (subject to change). Meetings are open to all members of the organization. Please check our website for updates.

Theater Party at Shea's!

BGMC members who were present at the first annual meeting, new members and their guests will be invited to a holiday theater party on Tuesday, December 17. Thanks to an extraordinary opportunity, as part of the evening's festivities we will be going to Shea's Performing Arts Center to see *Mamma Mia!*. We have reserved the front rows. Tickets will cost \$26 for chorus members and \$52 for their guests. This opportunity became available only for a short period this summer. If you have not yet reserved your seat, try throwing yourself at John Herbert's feet and begging him for one of the extra tickets he might have reserved.

President's Column: 2002 Annual Report

by James Estep, BGMC President

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus is a thriving organization. Since our incorporation in the Spring of '01, we have grown well past our earlier expectations. I'd like to share with you our accomplishments this first year and our goals for this coming year. The Board's planning is outlined in a strategic plan document which we distribute to members each year. We have reason to celebrate: we have met all the goals set in the first year's plan!

2001-2002

Here's what we together have accomplished in our first year, by working as a community:

1. The BGMC enlisted the enthusiastic support and services of one of the most expert choral directors in Western New York, Barbara Wagner. Under her affectionate guidance, we auditioned and formed a men's chorus of over 60 voices that performed two well-publicized and well-received concerts with great style and flash.

2. We invited the participation of a diversity of men, both singers and non-singers, and supported chorus members with a scholarship fund.

3. We maintained financial stability and engaged in a wide range of fund raising activities. This was accomplished with singers' annual dues, with extra funding contributed by the members of the Board, with advertising and ticket sales, and, especially, with funds generated by the formation of the Friends of BGMC by Dennis Stuart. In short, our financial stability rests solidly on your shoulders.

4. We incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a strong, enthusiastic, working Board of Directors. Our leadership has established the administrative direction that sets the Chorus on the right path toward inclusion as a strong member of the Buffalo arts and cultural communities.

5. The BGMC has set out to foster an inclusive, supportive and friendly organization that enhances the self-esteem of its membership. Most notably this attitude appears in our

rehearsals and at our frequent and exuberant potlucks and in our willingness to participate in community activities, which are important to the GLBT and arts communities.

6. Our newsletter and our website (www.BuffaloGayMensChorus.com) keep you informed of events and news, helps keep us connected as a singing group, and place us in front of the Buffalo community and beyond.

7. Barbara Wagner has done a great deal to integrate the BGMC into the larger musical and cultural communities through tireless networking with local artists, directors and members of the Buffalo choral community.

8. As a singing organization, we emerged out of a minority community and we encourage men from other minority communities to join us in our mission. We continue to actively seek to open the Chorus membership to a greater diversity. We did this last year by advertising in the local minority press, by word of mouth and by personal contact. We welcome any man who is capable of passing the minimum audition requirements to sing with us.

9. The BGMC has established a parallel non-singing group of volunteers on which the concert performances and fund raising activities rest. Buffalo Front Runners have generously given their time and effort to ushering our concerts. John Herbert and his team from Shea's track ticket sales and staffing the door at our concerts. Volunteers from GLYS have helped at the concerts and during receptions. Chorus members can focus on singing due to the support the Chorus has received from these other community organizations. Individual chorus members and a growing group of non-singing volunteers have shouldered the responsibility for receptions and concert setup.

10. We have met our first year's financial goal of raising approximately \$10,000 of unearned income and closed out the year at the end of June with over \$18,000 in the bank after our financial obligations were met. Approximately \$10,000 will be reserved for the trip to the Montreal GALA festival in 2004. The balance, bolstered by dues, will be used to

finance this year's operation, including Barbara's stipend, concert production, receptions, advertising, ticket sales, and venue rental—all things we need to bring to the Buffalo community the splendor and excitement of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus.

Goals for 2002-2003

1. Expand the singing membership to 75 singers. In the interest of musical balance, we are especially looking for men with low voices to bolster the Bass II section. You can help by recruiting new members.

2. Open an office for the purpose of housing our ever-expanding music library and centralizing our communications.

3. In the interest of improving our singers' musicianship skills, Bill Fay has arranged music education classes in both sight-reading and vocal technique.

4. The Board has established standing committees (and designated chairs) to manage and supervise some administrative functions for the Chorus: Membership (John Herbert), PR and Marketing (Doug Levy), Development and Fund Raising (John Herbert), Production (Woody Sipprell), Communications (Roger Parris and Max Phillips). If you wish to participate in these activities, please see the committee chair.

5. We are planning for a Chorus overnight musical retreat.

6. We have established this newsletter for the purpose of informing chorus members and friends of our plans, needs, accomplishments, and successes.

7. Under the leadership of Dennis Stuart and Russ Link we are working to expand the Friends of Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus.

8. The board and supporters are actively working and writing grants to find a corporate sponsor and obtain greater financial support for our projects.

9. Expand the visibility of the Chorus and further integrate the BGMC into the arts and cultural communities of Buffalo and the surround-

See President, page 4

President

continued from page 3

ing area by attending workshops and cultural activities and by giving our support to other community events.

10. We are working to expand our audience from approximately 900 who attended last June's concerts to 1200 next January and to 1500 for the June

2003 concert.

11. Attract more non-singing volunteers who can support the BGMC when we put on concerts.

12. We are working to close the books at the end of our fiscal year with \$30,000 unobligated funds in the bank.

Based on our past accomplishments, we know that these modest goals are well within our capabilities. Reaching them will require each of you

to increase, by just a little bit, your level of participation over last year's effort by hustling an advertisement, selling 25 more tickets, recruiting a singer or a non-singing volunteer. We're well on our way—and we can't do it without you. Thanks for everything you've done in the past—now let's work together to build the BGMC's future!

Treasurer's Report

by R. Mark Meyer,
BGMC Treasurer

Our first year of existence was very successful financially as well as artistically. Thanks to loyal concertgoers, generous friends and supporters, committed singers, and a hard-working board, the Chorus made a profit from both concerts and set aside money as a foundation for our second year.

Since then expenses for the upcoming year have taken our cash balance down to around \$17,000. The Board has encumbered \$10,000 of that amount for the proposed GALA trip to Montreal in 2004. That trip is estimated to cost about \$35,000 so planning for it soon is important.

We anticipate some new expenses may arise in the near term, such as rental of office space. As the chorus grows, its budget will grow, reflect-

ing the dynamic and exciting organization that this is.

Finally, the current Treasurer and the Board wish to heartily thank Jeff Wilson who served

Income and expenses for the fiscal year ending July 31, 2002:

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| INCOME | |
| Dues | \$ 6595 |
| Gifts | 8282 |
| Ticket Sales | 18200 |
| Advertising | 8242 |
| Other Income | 705 |
| | \$ 42024 |
| EXPENSES | |
| Music Director | \$ 4200 |
| Music | 1932 |
| Insurance/Legal | 1449 |
| Misc. concert | 11865 |
| Other expenses | 4486 |
| | \$ 23932 |
| Net gain FY 2001 | \$ 18092 |
| Balance FY 2000 | 2650 |
| Balance FY 2001 | \$ 20742 |

as Treasurer since the Chorus's inception. He did a great job of keeping us honest and informed. Thanks are also due to John Herbert for his past and continued financial expertise and advice.

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc. is a member of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, Inc. (GALA Choruses). GALA Choruses fosters the artistic and organizational development of member choruses through a variety of programs and services. For more information, visit www.galachoruses.org

Barb's Corner

by Barbara Wagner, BGMC Music Director

Well, Summer DID come in, just as we predicted so confidently last June. I hope that yours has been filled with all of the fun things that only Summer can bring and that maybe you've even found time to dream a little. My heart is still filled with the joy and brightness of our first year together.

I met two lovely men from San Francisco during my sojourn in Scandinavia. They don't sing but are generous supporters of the SF Gay Men's Chorus. Of course, with my heart planted firmly on my sleeve, I had to tell them all about what we had done. They told me, with huge smiles on their faces, to tell you all how proud they are of what we've accomplished.

Some of us have been able to keep in touch, but I sure do miss those wild and wonderful Tuesday night rehearsals. There are lots of exciting things in the works for next season.

As was mentioned at the end of last season, we are definitely going to be offering a Voice Class, led by Lonnie Arnold, late of the Rochester area and now Lewiston; and a Sight Singing class led by Bill Fay. Thanks, Bill, for the brilliant idea and the follow through.

We're thinking about forming a small group of singers who would be available to do runout concerts—sort of BGMC Ambassadors, if you will. You'll be hearing more about that from Max Phillips and Ron Groth and me too.

Dennis Stuart and the new Membership Committee are hard at work assembling "choral etiquette" guidelines. It will include—stuff like—DO be caring and supportive of the efforts of your fellow singers. DON'T tell your fellow singers that they're singing the wrong notes, or singing too loudly. Trust me—the director will find a way to take care of those tiny problems.

Your hardworking Music Committee has already met twice and much of the music for next season has been chosen, ordered and is in. Our January concerts will include music written about music—we're calling our program "Of Sweet Harmony". The June concerts will be "Songs of Freedom."

We'll be auditioning new people (please help us find some more second basses!) on September 10 beginning at 5:30 and the first rehearsal of the season will follow at 7 PM, so please spread the word. Once again, we'll be rehearsing at the U-U Church at 695 Elmwood Avenue.

We also plan to hold a general solo/ensemble audition on October 15, so chorus members who are interested in stepping forward for that kind of work can begin to prepare.

Your Board, complete with its new members, has continued to meet all Summer, highlighted by a day long retreat. I continue to be in awe of their dedication and devotion to this miraculous Chorus.

I can't wait to see you ALL very soon. As we've all come to know, we are doing important and affirming work that needs to continue.

Much love,
Barb

Support Your Chorus! Become a FOBGMC!

by Dennis Stuart

FRIENDS OF THE BUFFALO GAY MEN'S CHORUS... what's that, you ask? Simply put, it's a group of people (W-O-N-D-E-R-F-U-L people) who write checks to help us Choristers concentrate on what we do best: making beautiful music!

Generous support from the Friends of BGMC helps assure that more people are touched by the BGMC experience. The valued help of the Friends brings our community one step closer to an understanding and acceptance of diversity.

And what a diverse bunch the first group of Friends is! Not only does it

include some BGMC members, it also boasts lots of moms, dads, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors and friends of choristers, too—and there are two banks that consider themselves Friends!

In our first season the Friends of BGMC raised approximately \$3,500. What does BGMC do with this money? Most importantly, BGMC has already put some money aside to represent the Western New York community at the GALA Festival in Montreal in July 2004. And it costs money to keep you informed of BGMC activities—this newsletter, for example, must be printed and mailed. We will be renting office space, buying a computer, and

recording our concerts—it's a very long list.

Yes, we want you to join the Friends group... you knew we'd ask, didn't you? All contributors of \$25 or more will have their names printed in both the January and June concert programs. Please clip the coupon on the back page, make your check payable to Friends of BGMC and mail it to Friends of BGMC, P.O. Box 448, Buffalo, NY 14207. Chorus members can simply give their checks to a Board member or to Dennis Stuart at any rehearsal. We need you in the Friends of The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus!

Contributions to the Friends of the BGMC are tax-deductible.

Whether You Sing or Not, You Can be a Member of the BGMC

You don't have to sing to be a member of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus — and you don't have to self-identify as gay or a man, either! As our Mission Statement says, "Singing membership is open to all men who pass a simple audition, pay modest dues and attend rehearsals regularly. Non-singers are also welcome, as there are many areas in which their talents are needed."

Men who pass an audition and sing in the BGMC are assessed \$50 dues per semester, and are considered "Singing Members" of the organization. Men and women who do not sing, but who wish

to have voting privileges as well as serve on committees and receive BGMC communications can join the organization as "Non-Singing Members" for \$50 per fiscal year (July-June). Singing members who may have to drop out of the Chorus will be automatically re-classified as non-singing members until the end of the fiscal year.

Please contact the Membership Committee, the Music Director or any member of the board to discuss joining the BGMC. Tell your friends about us—you'll be glad you did!

BGMC Singers Perform with Dance Company

Five men of the BGMC sang the National Anthem to open the performance of Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Nichols School's Glenn and Awdry Flickinger Performing Arts Center last July.

Presented as Pick of the Crop Dance's "New Moves 2002", Puccini's *La Bohème* featured six principal dancers and special guests The Buffalo Jills. Choreographer and former jock Peter Pucci drew all the exuberant dance movements in this full-length, "nine-inning" composition from the world of sports, from basketball to badminton and soccer to surfing.

While not an official performance of the BGMC (the ensemble was prepared without the assistance of Music Director Barbara Wagner, who was abroad), the rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by tenors Kevin Thompson, Guy Tomassi and Roger Parris and basses Daniel Wasinger and Jaime Stephan Goldfuss was warmly received by an enthusiastic crowd of about 400.

Our thanks go to Curt Steinzor and POCD for inviting the BGMC to participate in this joyful event!

BGMC Representatives Attend Arts Council Luncheon

by M.R. Phillips

On Thursday, August 15th, BGMC President Jim Estep and board member Max Phillips attended a luncheon sponsored by the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County, held at the Castellani Art Museum at Niagara University.

Keynote speaker Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY) spoke about her election campaign in New York's 28th Congressional District. Her discussion focused on issues surrounding the local and national arts communities. She believes that the promotion of arts and humanities can be critical in the revitalization of areas like Western New York that suffer from slow economic growth. Congresswoman Slaughter currently co-chairs the Congressional Arts Caucus, a bipartisan organization that supports the arts at a Federal level. The caucus's main focus is to secure annual funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The BGMC is a member of the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County.

SAVE THESE DATES!

Tuesday September 10 2002 • Auditions from 5:30 • First Rehearsal at 7:00 PM
Tuesday October 15 2002 • Solo auditions at 5:30 PM
Monday December 2 2002 • First World AIDS Day Interfaith Healing Service at 7:30 PM
Friday December 6 2002 • Singers' and Non-Singers' Party
Monday December 16 2002 • Extra rehearsal
Tuesday December 17 2002 • Mamma Mia! (no rehearsal)
Monday December 30 2002 • Extra rehearsal
Friday January 24 2003 • Winter Concert, *Of Sweet Harmony*, at Unitarian-Universalist Church
Saturday January 25 2003 • Winter Concert, *Of Sweet Harmony*, Location TBA
Tuesday January 28 2003 • Post-concert party (no rehearsal)
Friday June 13 2003 • Spring Concert, *Songs of Freedom*, at Unitarian-Universalist Church
Saturday June 14 2003 • Spring Concert, *Songs of Freedom*, at Westminster Presbyterian Church
Tuesday June 17 2002 • Annual Meeting and Elections
Friday-Saturday August 22-23 2003 • Chorus retreat
Saturday-Saturday July 17-24 2004 • GALA Choruses Festival, Montreal

BGMC

PO BOX 448
Buffalo, NY 14207

Cut along dotted line and mail in bottom portion with your donation today!

Yes, I'll join the Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus!

Thank you for helping the growth & success of BGMC. Your contribution is tax deductible.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Composer | \$2,500 + | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Donation \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Would you like your name appear in our next program? (Please PRINT exactly how you would like your name to appear.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maestro | \$1,000 - \$2,499 | <i>In memory of</i> _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Virtuoso | \$400 - \$999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Honorarium _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conductor | \$200 - 399 | <i>In honor of</i> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if you do NOT want your name to appear in our program. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soloist | \$80 - \$199 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate | \$25 - \$79 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | \$ _____ | | |

Friends who contribute at the \$200 "Conductor" level and above will receive two tickets to our next concert.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip +4 _____

Home telephone _____ Business Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

☐ Please add me to the BGMC mailing list.

☐ I have time or services that may help the BGMC. Please contact me.